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Will it Pay Me to Go to High School?

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Will It Pay Me to Go to High School?

A Big Question

This booklet is addressed to the pupils of the upper grades. It is a plea for better preparation. Thousands of boys and girls are asking themselves in all seriousness, "Will it pay me to go to high school?" Parents are asking the same about their children. To you it is an all-important question. Your future will be changed by the way you decide. When you complete the common school you stand at the fork of the road. It means much whether you turn to the right or to the left.

Two Facts to Keep in Mind

You must keep two facts in mind while deciding this question.

1. Now is your only chance to get a high school education.

If you do not go to high school now there is not one chance in a thousand that you will ever go. There are exceptions to this rule, but the exceptions are very rare. You must count this your first, last, and only chance to get a high school education.

2. When listening to advice, give ear to those who have had a high school education. Those who have had a high school education are best able to judge its worth. It is rare indeed that a graduate of any high school ever expresses regret for either the time or the money it cost. Select a hundred high school graduates who are over twenty-five years old, and practically every one of them will be

enthusiastic over the worth of a high school course. Select another hundred men and women of experience and judgment that are more than twenty-five years old, but who from some cause did not get to go to high school and a big majority will express the keenest regret that they did not have the advantages of a high school course.

Then select a number of young persons scarcely out of their teens, or a number of men and women who are practically illiterate, and many of them may make light of the thought of going to high school. They have never experienced the advantages of high school and are not intelligent enough to understand what they have missed.

Which class of opinions should have most weight with you? If you were thinking of buying an automobile, would you listen to the ad-

vice of a man who had never seen a car, owned a car, or driven a car? You would not. Neither would you take the advice of a Filipino who had never seen, or heard of an apple about going in the apple business either as a dealer or as an apple grower. Yet either of these would be as competent to advise you as a person who has never had a high school course would be to advise you about going to high school. Good common sense would tell you to seek the advice of some person who had a high school education rather than that of a person who has never had such advantages.

The Demand Growing

There was never a greater demand for high school graduates than at the present. Many firms now expect and demand a high school education for their employees. Other qualities being equal the high school boy will

win over those without such training. This law is as immutable as a law of nature. You can neither change nor escape it. You may deny it, you may rage against the justice of it, you may try to explain it away, but the stubborn fact remains that with equal native ability, like application and faithful devotion to duty, young people trained by a high school course will surpass in any undertaking the same number of those without such training. Here and there are exceptions, but the rule is true. The discipline and training of a high school course will give you a tremendous advantage in most lines over the person not so trained.

A returned soldier, a friend of the writer, declared there was no chance for promotion in the army unless you had a high school or college education. He firmly believed there was much injustice done because as he said,

"Every fellow with a high school or a college education became an officer in three months while the rest of us had to obey them." The poor boy could not understand that the training of high school or college had increased the power of leadership many fold. The judgment, the self-reliance, the determination and often the self-denial that had made the boy persevere and complete a high school or college course were the very qualities needed in an officer. This same young man less than ten years ago was boasting of how much more he could earn than any of his classmates. He actually thought they were wasting time and money in going to high school. No greater tribute can be paid to the worth of a high school or college course than the great number of officers that developed from such men. Count up the number of high school graduates you know who were in the service a year or more

and then find what proportion of them were officers when mustered out. There is a reason for it. Four years of training bore fruit in leadership.

High School Influence is Good

A high school course will bring out and develop your best qualities and your greatest strength. It will broaden your sympathies, sharpen your intellect, extend your mental horizon, and multiply your capabilities. Once in a while you will hear some one telling how the high school spoiled this or that young man. The truth is he was spoiled in spite of the high school instead of because of it. Lax home discipline, too much money, too much leisure, too many outside dissipations, too little high school study, too much high school loafing: these are the things that ruined him. He went to the bad, not because he went to high school but because he

was in the high school physically and not mentally. His interest never reached high school. All his thoughts and impulses were at cross purposes with the high school. His purpose was not to get his lessons, but to criticise, find fault, and make objections. Too often his parents were willing listeners to these same petty complaints. Too often they fanned this discontent until the thoughtful person sees readily why the boy failed in high school.

People emphasize the failure of high school graduates because they are not common. It is the strange and unusual that attracts attention. Because a few persons with high school training fall by the wayside, people speak often of these examples. They forget that the same high school at the time was both life-saver and life-giver to ten times as many others. They point to the one

failure in a hundred, the only knotty apple on the whole tree, and exclaim, "that is what the high school does!" It is like unto a drunken husband who beats his wife and gets a three-column writeup and his picture on the front page of the daily, while ten thousand worthy husbands go unmentioned. Let one pupil out of a high school go wrong and unthinking croakers for a decade will point it out as what will surely happen to you should you ever go to high school. There is little more logic in it than to argue because one boy becomes a thief while working in a certain store, that every other boy who goes to that store to work will become a thief.

It Is Thinking Power that Counts

Your fund of information gleaned from a high school course may be worth much to you, but the think-

ing power is a far greater asset. The thinking power gained by unraveling an involved Latin sentence twenty years later, helps you to read your abstract of land title correctly. The power you gain by a daily wrestle with quadratic equations may make it possible for you later to puncture quickly the fake project of the professional promoter. The facts as well as the mental power gained in a study of Ancient Rome will enable you to find the flaws in the half baked political curealls peddled about as a panacea for all our national ills. The knowledge of simple chemical reactions learned in the high school laboratory may make you a better cook. The power and skill gained poring over the theorems of solid geometry may come back a decade later to make you a more successful architect.

It is the thinking power generated

in the high school, rather than the facts learned, that enables the high school graduate to outrun others in the attainments of life. This thinking power is a charged battery ready to be tapped for any purpose later in life. After a good high school course you will meet and master new processes or new conditions with far less loss of time and with much greater skill than you can ever do without such training. Time and effort spent in building up your reservoirs of thought power pay golden dividends compounded at frequent intervals in later life.

The Critic's Motive

Occasionally some self-made, short-sighted business man may really think a high school education harmful. If you analyze this man, you are apt to find he made a money success by a combination of dogged tenacity, good luck, and rigid economy. The world

is of less importance to him than his own business. He wants a cheap boy for a cheap job. He wants his ashes hauled for fifty cents a load. The boy who has never thought beyond hauling ashes to the dump will continue to do unskilled work at a small price. The high school graduate may not seek such jobs readily. He can haul ashes with more skill and less labor perhaps than the other, but he does not care to take it up as a life job. When you find this hard-headed business man arguing against the high school education you will find in nearly every case he wants his rough labor done at a small price, or else he has his own peculiar way of doing things and wants the untrained boy that he may train him in his own methods. To such a man, the boy taught to copy and to follow blindly is the best educated. You should seek the motive of the employer who condemns too vigor-

ously the high school and its graduates.

A Pleasant Four Years

Four years in high school will be an oasis of pleasure in your life. It covers the period of most enthusiasm. It is the dawn of young manhood and young womanhood. New and greater interests are aroused. New hopes and ambitions are born. Friendships made here last through life. Sordid things are forgotten. Every American boy and girl should have this four-year inherent birthright before assuming the weightier responsibilities of life. This should become an American standard. Life at best will be serious enough later. Often the things condemned as being utterly unpractical turn out to be the most practical things of all. Life at the forge or in the shop will grow monotonous at best. The gem of literature, the appreciation of music, the touch of art hanging in memory

that relieves the grind of the daily task may be the most precious thing learned in early life. To live over again the school drama, the pennant winning baseball game, the junior debate, or to recall the pretty poetic fancy which still shines a beacon light to your own better thoughts, these lived over again in later days make daily tasks less drudgery and restore youthful smiles to care-drawn faces. These after all are the most practical things. We need training for our avocations, our vacant hours, quite as much as for our vocations.

The High School Promotes Health

To the majority of young people a high school is more beneficial to health than a sanatorium. High school life is buoyant and inspiring. There is no time for morbid introspection. Only occasionally is there

an exception. Graduates of high school entering the army are far above the average enlistment in physical perfection. Physical education, a pride in correct carriage and proper breathing, a knowledge of the simple rules of health and hygiene all tend toward making the high school course a good guarantee to better health in its graduates. Observe the straightened shoulders, the improved carriage, the better poise, the lung capacity of the average high school graduate compared with the boy or girl who went to work in the shop at fourteen, and you will be convinced of the worth of a high school course from the standpoint of health.

It Will Pay In Dollars and Cents

The best financial investment you can possibly make at fourteen is

going to high school. It will pay you and pay you liberally in increased earning power. If you know a safe investment, if you can recognize a genuine bargain, if you can even begin to reason on finance, it is easy to prove to you that going to high school is the best investment you can make. The following figures are vouched for by the United States Bureau of Education. They are based upon the investigation of the earning power of a number of boys from various school classes at the age of twenty-five. At that age the boys who went to work at fourteen were earning on the average $12.75 per week. The boys of these same classes who took a high school course were earning at the age of twenty-five $31.00 per week.

Does It Pay?

We estimate forty years as the

earning period of a man's life, that is, from the time he is twenty until he is sixty years old. Let us assume that the earning power remains absolutely the same after the age of twenty-five, and then counting fifty weeks to the year, the average boy that goes to work at fourteen will earn $25,500 in a life time. The average boy with a high school education will earn $62,000 in the same length of time. The time spent in securing a high school education is forty months. Forty months of high school study, then, will increase the earning power of an average boy $36,000. If you are a boy of average ability a high school course is worth $45.00 per day or $900.00 per month to you while you are going to high school.

Does It Pay?

In this investigation of hundreds

of boys, those who had gone through high school were earning by the time they were twenty-five years old $900.00 more per year than the boys who went to work at fourteen. If this increased earning power were capitalized at 5 per cent it would be equal to a working capital of $18,000 invested in their business.

Does It Pay?

The boys who went to work when they were fourteen had earned in all by the time they were twenty-five only $5,112.50, while those who had taken a high school course had earned by the same time $7,337.50. These boys who had spent four years in high school study earned over $2,000 more each by the time they were twenty-five than the boys who began to earn money four years sooner.

Does It Pay?

These figures are as authentic as any that have been compiled. Figures for girls will show slight variation but the same ratio of earning power. You and your parents should ponder these figures well before you determine to leave school at fourteen. For a solid financial investment you can neither equal nor excel a high school education.

Objections Sometimes Heard

Here are some of the objections offered to a high school course.

1. It costs too much. The cost will vary in different cities. As a rule it need not cost much more to go to high school than to stay at home. Board will cost the same. Clothing will cost little more. Books should not cost more than a dollar a month. Incidentals will cost just what you

make them. The larger your incidental expense above a small minimum, the poorer your high school work. Ask your high school principal if this is not true. Every high school boy and girl should earn every cent of the cost of a high school course except board and clothes, and many should help in the cost of these. Too much money furnished by a doting mother or an indulgent father has ruined more pupils than ever a high school itself has spoiled. The best pupils are rarely the most liberal spenders. Fathers and mothers who blame the high school for failures will usually find it, instead, in their own too liberal allowance of money.

2. Must work to help support the family. This is sometimes a worthy reason, but nine times out of ten it is only an excuse. The child is sometimes thought of like a young colt—it must

earn its board and keep. If you want a good horse beware of working the colt too early. Better by far leave your boy or girl penniless at your death, but with a high school education, than to leave them with thousands and without an education. Go back and read again the money value of an education.

3. Pupils quit high school because they dislike one or more of the high school teachers. This is as foolish as for a carpenter to quit his trade because he must work for a while under a foreman whom he does not like, or for an engineer to quit railroading because he does not like the conductor. In every such case, you "Cut off your nose to spite your face."

4. Many high school pupils quit because they fail in one or more subjects. You will meet failures in every

walk of life. The sensible thing is to take the subject over again. It may be the thing that will do you most good. It would be a real poor salesman who quit the first time he failed to land a prospect. Quitting high school because you fail in some subject is apt to show a fatal weakness in you—that of being a quitter, quitting any time, anywhere, unless things are to your liking.

5. Sickness or other misfortune makes you lose time. It is discouraging, it is true, to drop back to a strange class and with younger students. You will meet far worse discouragements often in life. If you think of it in the right light it is as absurd as to refuse to go in swimming or to play a game unless you could be with those with whom you learned.

6. A good job tempts you to quit. This is one of the most fatal mistakes. It is the great danger of working a

few years before you start to high school. To have your own spending money tempts you to continue to work. There will always be jobs. There will be jobs next year and the next. There will be jobs after you are dead and gone. You can get a job any time, but you will never have more than one chance to get a high school education, and that chance is now. One of the most keenly disappointed young men I have ever known quit high school at the end of his sophomore year to take what seemed a good job. Two years later the firm failed. A year afterward the greatest opportunity of a lifetime came to him. It was a chance for honor and distinction in a line which he very much coveted. He received the appointment, but failed in the examination because of lack of training. Opportunity will knock at your door, but cannot enter unless you are prepared.

7. It takes too long to complete a course. Your four years in high school will seem the shortest of your life. What seems a long time now will glide by like a summer outing. Your regret later will be that you cannot prolong the years. The short cut business college has its place and often does a splendid service. Like a quick lunch counter it serves for emergencies only. You can't mature corn in three weeks. You cannot develop and train intellectual powers in three months. Time and effort are both essential to a well developed mind. A squash can be raised in a season, but it takes an oak a century to mature. You get out of a school course in proportion to the time and energy you put into it. When you grow to maturity your regret will be that you did not spend more time in high school rather than less.

Bewailing Your Fate Later

Just now the future lies before you. Just now you are master of your own fate in regard to going to high school. If you fail to grasp this opportunity now, wailing ten years from now will not avail. Regrets for neglected opportunities do not pay cash dividends. Now and not later is seeding time. As you sow, you will reap. I have often heard bitter regrets from young people who had the chance for high school and refused it. Urge your father and mother to give you a boost toward a better preparation for life. If you are a boy or girl of only average ability it will pay you in increased earning power and increased living power.

Your high school course will open new worlds of thought to you. It will open to you a bigger, brighter, better future, just as much broader

and just as much better as your present vision and knowledge and judgment is better than your fourth grade. You will learn how to meet and mingle with young men and young women. You will discover yourself, your powers, your possibilities, and your proper ambitions. This is the greatest discovery that any one can make. To understand yourself, your abilities and your limitations, this points out to you the high road to success.

In high school you will meet a faculty of college bred young men and women of high ideals and lofty motives. To know some of these intimately as teachers is a priceless possession. Some of these may be to you what Mark Hopkins was to Garfield. Some high school associate will be to you like Copperfield's Agnes, constantly pointing upward. Nowhere else are you so apt to find,

as in high school, a friend who will teach you to lift your head above the clouds while you keep your feet firmly on the earth.

Your supreme test is at hand. Will you slink like a slacker, or will you go over the top like a *man*?

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